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ABSTRACT

One of a series prepared by the Hawaii Newspaper Agency, this teaching guide offers suggestions for using the newspaper to teach English to nonnative speakers. Recommendations include teaching language through culture--not taking anything for granted in teaching English as a second language--and techniques for analyzing newspaper ads, headlines, and advice columns. (SW)

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using your daily newspaper TO TEACH ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE



An educational project of the
Hawaii Newspaper Agency, Inc.

CS 201 677

WE ARE INDEBTED.....

For the ideas in this booklet, the Hawaii Newspaper Agency is indebted to many people, some of whom we can name, others of whom we cannot.

We are indebted to the teachers who attended workshops on using the newspaper to teach English as a second language and have passed on to us their own ideas.

We are indebted to *Dr. Charles Blatchford*, assistant professor of English as a Second Language at the University of Hawaii. It is he who stresses the advantages of teaching language through exposure to the culture which the newspaper reflects.

And it is he who cautions teachers not to assume cultural knowledge on the part of their students and to question every classroom activity to determine if the time spent will be worth the effort -- the effort to the student, that is.

We are also indebted to *Dr. Blatchford* for his encouragement and help in preparing this booklet. He has an article in *TESOL QUARTERLY*, 7/2 (June, 1973) 145-51 called *NEWSPAPERS: VEHICLES FOR TEACHING ESOL WITH A CULTURAL FOCUS*, which is essential reading for all TESL teachers.

We are indebted to *Mrs. Sophie Mahoe* who taught in the Model Cities program and herself learned English as a second language when she came to Hawaii from Samoa.

We are indebted to *Mrs. Eva Budar* who teaches at McKinley High School in Honolulu and shared many of her ideas with teachers at workshops.

This booklet is not intended as a comprehensive guide to using the newspaper in TESL classes. Some ideas may work for some teachers with some students; others may not. The booklet is a jumping-off point for teachers who see the value of using current, interesting, functional material related directly to the lives their students will lead in the community.

Teach Language Through Culture

The cultural shock for a child or an adult coming into a strange community from another country is immense. It is hard enough, sometimes, for a child to change schools. How much more traumatic for the child with little or no knowledge of English to find himself not only in an English-speaking class but also in a totally foreign environment where there are a million adjustments to make.

The Samoan child coming to Hawaii, for instance, is entering a completely different culture even though both islands are in the Pacific and both peoples are Polynesian.

A teacher of English as a second language, herself a Samoan who learned English when she came to Hawaii at age nine, said that many Samoan children get into trouble stealing because what is stealing in Hawaii may not be considered stealing in their own culture.

She gave these examples. If she, in Samoa, should see and admire the muu-muu hanging on her neighbor's clothesline, she might go over and take it to wear to a party that night. The next morning she would return the garment with thanks and the neighbor would be pleased that she had considered herself a member of the family and therefore able to borrow the muu-muu. This would not be stealing.

Neither is cutting down and eating the bunch of bananas your friend has been cultivating. In Samoa, she said, you might take them, eat them, thank the friend for them and he in turn would feel grateful that you had considered yourself enough a part of the family to enjoy them.

Now think what happens to the Samoan youngster when he applies the same concept in Hawaii. He's in trouble.

Basic Ideas Are Adaptable

Let's look at some specifics. Let's assume that the newspaper is going to be one of your primary sources of material for your TESL class. It doesn't matter if your students are in grade school or adults in night classes, the basic ideas can and should be adapted.

How do you start?

Most students have seen a newspaper in their own country so the concept should not be difficult for them, even if they are quite young. An interesting bulletin board display before you begin your course could be made with newspapers from other countries so that all the students could look at them and see differences and similarities.

Newspapers from other countries are very easy to get in Hawaii. You don't even have to buy them. Call the public relations office of an airline that flies overseas. You'll have no trouble finding an interested public relations officer who will probably be only too glad to get rid of some of the papers he has. If you don't get the offer of a constant supply, ask people going abroad to bring you back a newspaper. Use these as bases of comparison throughout the school year. They also keep interest high.

Be sure you allow the students plenty of time to look at whatever you have put up and be sure to include copies of the local newspapers. Just looking at them will help them become familiar.

Unless you are working with very young children, use the whole newspaper. Some people advocate taking a section at a time or even a page at a time but teachers who have learned English as a second language disagree with this approach. They feel that whatever the child is working with should be in context. If he does not have the whole newspaper to work with, then he doesn't see where the little bit he is using fits in.

The same teacher also said that we must think of the confusion that exists in the mind of the youngster who first goes to the store to buy something. Chances are he is sent on the errand because he knows more English than his parents.

In Samoa, she says, oil almost always means hair oil. But the child who is sent to the store to buy oil faces a terrible problem because there are so many different kinds. He interprets what his mother tells him one way and then is confused because he still has a major decision to make in unfamiliar circumstances.

The cultural shock even for someone going from one English-speaking country to another is very real. It is so much worse for the child coming here from a completely different culture. And for an adult, also.

Add to this the fact that many immigrants have little extra money and it is apparent that whether they are youngsters in grade school or adults in a night school, they need all the help they can get to adjust quickly.

Some questions immediately arise for the teacher of foreign students.

Can I use a beginning reader such as would be used in a first grade class for students much older than first grade?

What do I as a teacher need to know about the culture from which my students have come?

What things are new to the student, not just by name but in function?

These are only some of a myriad of questions the good teacher must pose to himself -- and must answer.

Don't Take Anything for Granted

Teachers who have themselves learned English as a second language know that the key lies in understanding the culture of the country from which the student comes and teaching the culture of this one.

As you cannot teach culture without teaching language, the best way to go into language study may be through the back door of culture. This way you will help the newcomer understand and feel at home in his new surroundings while teaching him to use the language.

Remember he will be no more fluent in English than the child who is learning his own tongue and he will be at a greater disadvantage in that, when he goes home, the chances are that English will not be spoken.

One teacher of English as a second language said that one big mistake teachers make is to talk too much to foreign students. She said that if the teacher wants a particular word taught, she should not put a lot of extra words before or behind it in a sentence. The student cannot then isolate and learn the new word.

Once you have decided that culture and English go hand-in-hand, don't overlook the value of the daily newspaper for classroom instruction.

Its pages reflect the total community in which the student will live and work. *This is where he will find a job or rent a house; learn about how government works so he can cast his vote when that time arrives; learn the names of streets he must walk to school; find out where stores are and what can be bought where and for how much.*

Youngsters in social studies classes in American Samoa learn about Hawaii through the pages of the Honolulu Star-Bulletin. Many of them will come to Hawaii. The more they learn about all aspects of life here before they get here, the better off they will be.

Even with older students, you might want them to do cutting and pasting. Remember that, to all intents and purposes, these students know less English than first-graders. Cutting and pasting helps them remember by letting them see as they do.

Do not worry about the news itself. Adults and older children will be familiar with international news through their own papers; the younger children couldn't care less about it at this starting point. One thing will grow from the other. But, at the start, use the newspaper as a tool for teaching culture and, through culture, language and let the news content itself be unimportant.

Your exercises are going to build on material in the newspaper but do not necessarily encompass a knowledge of the newspaper itself. This will come as students ask questions about their daily "text".

Classified Ads Important

Teachers of adults often start with the classified advertising. Why? Because the classified ads are the most important things in the paper for many an adult. They help him find a job or look for a house or buy a used car. There is one problem. A lot of abbreviations are used in classifieds so that the customer can get more on a line and therefore more for his money. The foreign student cannot read the classifieds unless he can understand the abbreviations. So any teacher starting with the classifieds might do well to make a list of commonly-used abbreviations and teach these first.

The same abbreviations occur over and over again and taking four or five ads from the same classification is an easy way to teach these.

There are many other abbreviations in the paper also important to the newcomer. Examine dollar signs and abbreviations like *etc.* and *i.e.* What does *COD* mean? Why do some people use this means of purchasing items? What other ways can things be bought?

This method of paying for merchandise may be completely foreign to the immigrant yet may be very important to him in terms of how he manages his money.

Where To Begin?

Some teachers begin with the headlines; some with the first sentences in news stories; some with pictures. All say to avoid the comic strips and the cartoons at least at first because humor is such a cultural thing.

The headlines are a magnificent source of vocabulary words. Here are words which the foreign student will meet over and over again both in reading and in conversation. So match words in the headlines with objects or with actions or with places and drill and drill them so that they become familiar.

For instance, just take the headlines below.

"Woman" should be an easy word to teach but what about "slain"? What has happened to the woman at Anahola? And where is Anahola? And why does it have a capital letter when none of the other words do?

Now is your chance to get a map of the islands and teach geography as you are teaching vocabulary and grammar.

woman slain at Anahola

LIVUE — A 22-year-old woman was brutally beaten and killed yesterday morning at the house she was caring for on Aliomahu Road outside Anahola.

Identification was withheld because police are trying to notify her parents in California.

Police have a suspect in custody, but no charges had been filed in the case last night.

Police said they received a call at 9:11 a.m. yesterday from Andrew Melane, informing them of an apparent homicide at the Anahola home of James Shaw.

THE VICTIM APPARENTLY had been house-sitting while the owner of the house was on the Mainland. Friends said she had been living earlier with friends in Kekaha.

Although an autopsy has not yet been performed, police said the woman's throat was punctured, there were contusions and apparent fractures of the skull and abrasions on the hands, arms, hips and one foot.

Too, a cord was tied to her right wrist, police said.

There was no immediately apparent motive for the slaying, officials said, although the suspect in custody had not been questioned yesterday afternoon.

Makaha landlord sued by 2 renters

Two renters have sued their Makaha landlord for allegedly failing to get rid of rats and other vermin in their home and for failing to maintain water pipes to keep them from bursting.

Marshall and Susan Meyer are seeking \$1,000 in damages from their landlord, Simplicio Dela Cruz. The suit was filed for the couple by Legal Aid attorney Paul Alston.

The suit said the Meyers moved into the 84-870 Farrington Highway residence in February 1973. They discovered rats infesting the premises and the matter was not taken care of, the suit said. In December a pipe broke, flooding the unit and damaging personal possessions, it was alleged.

The suit alleged Dela Cruz to date has not returned the couple's \$30 security deposit. They paid \$95 a month for their portion of the duplex residence.

Electricity Bills Will Soon Rise

What is a *landlord*? Maybe the students know the words "*land*" and "*lord*" separately but does joining them together mean joining their individual meanings together? Here again one word has a capital letter. Again ask why and also where.

There's a big word in the third headline but it is an important one to every adult student and to most youngsters. What is it? What is a *bill*? What does an increase in the bill mean in terms of money?

The use you make of headlines for vocabulary is endless. Don't stop there though. You've got a lot of geography and economics just in these three headlines.

Do not try to use headlines as a means of making sentences or of explanation for a story, as we would if we were teaching English-speaking youngsters. It cannot be done, at the start anyway, with foreign students. Headlines are difficult because they break the rules of sentence structure. Later on, the students will be able to handle this but, at first, headlines will be very difficult for them to understand.

You will find, however, that if you use words in headlines for vocabulary building, just the reading of and looking at the headlines will unlock a lot of questions which, in turn, will unlock the headlines.

The lead sentences of news stories are probably the best means of teaching sentence structure. They are short, to the point, and answer the *who*, *what*, *where*, *when* and *why* questions. Again, the student is going to have to learn the vocabulary before he can understand. But again the vocabulary is the kind he will meet over and over again and so it may be much more worthwhile to start here, especially for the adult, than to start with a word list of some kind.

News stories are all constructed in about the same way. With practice in picking out the main points of the story, the student should be able to answer the *who*, *what*, *when*, *where* and *why* questions. If he can answer these,

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then the next step is to give him the answers and let him write the paragraph. Or simply make it up orally.

If you look back at the two news stories on the previous page you will clearly see that their structure is the same.

Each states what happened, whom it happened to, when it happened, where it happened, why it happened even though the events being reported are so different from one another.

You might want to give your students just five elements such as *a man, last month, in Honolulu, a broken leg, a car accident* and see if they can make up the first paragraph of a story. You will have to be sure that the students know what each element means, of course, before you can tackle something like this. But it is a good exercise in sorting out thoughts and putting them down.

Take Time -- Or Not?

One question the teacher must continually ask herself is if the explanation is worth the time. For instance, an unusual word, a little-known word for an object in a picture may not be worth the trouble of trying to explain it because it may be something the student will never use. The teacher's main aim is to help the student fast enough for him to adjust to his new community and feel comfortable in it. Sometimes the time is better spent on a word he will need to know than one that happens to come up but which will be of little future use.

Pictures are a great source of vocabulary. Finding out the names of things in pictures and relating them to the object the student knows helps him a great deal. But, because of our different cultures, we read different things into pictures. For example, someone naked in a picture may be funny to us; it may not be at all funny to someone from a different culture. Therefore, the point of the picture may be lost. But that's all right as long as we realize this. The picture is used primarily to

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teach words and also to show how we do some things differently.

Just don't be surprised if what is funny to you does not seem at all funny to your foreign students -- and vice versa.



Even though illustrations of comic strips appear above, you should not try to examine humor (or even be concerned about it) through comic strips and cartoons.

They are valuable for a different purpose.

The pictures will prove extremely useful tools for teaching about how we live and where we live. Just don't expect the students to laugh at them.

A picture in a cartoon or comic strip of part of a refrigerator may be enough to paint for us a mental picture of a kitchen even though we only recognize the object we partly see as a refrigerator by the seal on the door.

To the student who has never had a refrigerator, it will conjure up no such picture and so communication is broken down between teacher and student immediately.

Andy Capp, being part of another completely foreign culture (that of Cockney London) would be far too difficult for most students coming to Hawaii. But *Blondie and Dagwood* live in a typical American house and could prove very useful to the imaginative teacher.

What About Dear Abby?

The Dear Abby column will generate a lot of discussion about culture.

What makes people write to someone they don't know for advice? Would people in another country do this? Maybe some would not. What does this teach us about culture?

Reading a column to a class in which the students have some understanding of English and discussing these questions will be very enlightening to both the students and to you.

Letter writing is a good exercise for foreign students. It helps them put more informal thoughts down on paper. You could, with an adult group, have a Dear Abby column in the class with people asking questions and others giving the answers.

But don't take anything for granted. That's true of everything you do with foreign students. Don't take for granted that people everywhere write letters to someone like Abby, or discuss private affairs in public or send letters to the editor or put personal items about people in the classified ad columns. But, if you help your students understand that this is part of what Americans do, then these things will no longer seem foreign to them.

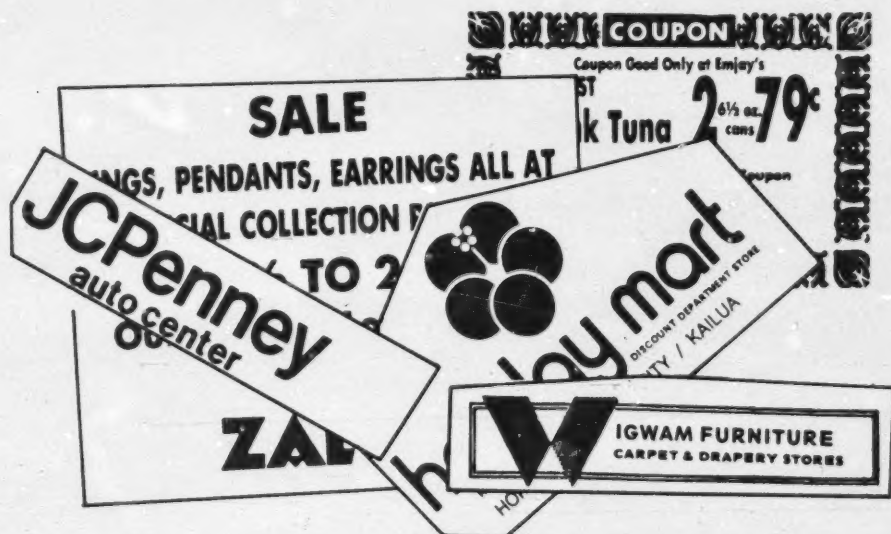
Has To Know The Community

The advertisements offer a wealth of information to the foreign student.

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No matter how young or old he is, he will need to know the names of stores and what is sold in which kind of store. Don't take it for granted that he knows this. In some countries you can only buy drugs in a drugstore or vegetables in a greengrocers. The idea of a drugstore which sells lots of everything besides drugs is foreign to almost all non-Americans (not only the foreign-language-speaking ones) but the ads for such a drugstore are beautiful learning material - for names of articles, for words that go with pictures, for the name of the store and its location, for prices, for a math lesson with money. And it's practical because all the students will be going into a drugstore sooner or later. Knowing what to expect in advance takes the anxiety out.

Ads contain a wealth of figurative language which we all understand and which we tend to think everyone understands. But what does a store sell at a *Baby Sale*? Or a *Moonlight Sale*? Or a *Sidewalk Sale*? If the foreign student knows what a baby is then does he think the sale is selling babies? How do you teach him that a moonlight sale is something he should take advantage of? This may seem elementary and not very important, yet it is very important in that he will be confronted with the terminology again and again.



And, while you're working on sales, talk about coupons as a money-saving device for adults. How many new citizens are familiar with coupons to get trading stamps (and what are trading stamps?) or coupons to get an item for a lesser price? This may be very important to the person on a limited amount of money who is trying to save in every way he can.

While you are making your students familiar with what coupons are, you are also teaching them a lot of new, practical English.

Coupons to order things by are great for writing exercises. Only specific things have to be filled in so the student can progress slowly with his writing. Again, he will have to do this often (or may want to) during his life so you are helping him adjust to the culture at the same time showing him how to write a check, or understand what COD means, or state what he wants, or know how to buy a stamp. Even some regular high school students think COD means Come on Down.

One teacher of English as a second language has suggested that fashion is universal so perhaps the clothing ads and stories about fashion are a good way to start using the newspaper to teach culture. Another teacher disagrees. She said that immigrants are not interested in fashion because they must use their money for more essential things. She said that with her adult students she would avoid this subject because reference to clothes might make some of them self-conscious. You be the judge with your students.

As in all classes with all students, what works for one group will not work for another. You, as the teacher, are the best judge. What you use and what you don't use will be up to you. Just don't forget that the newspaper is the very best means of teaching the culture of the new community because the newspaper reflects the community.

Start With The Family

Everyone, no matter where he comes from, has a house and a family. "House" is one of the words first learned in a foreign language and is easy because the structure itself is common to everyone.

Start with family things in the newspaper. In any teaching you start where the student is and the foreign student has his family with him even if he has not some of the other things that make up American life.

So you might start with pictures of mothers and fathers and children and teach the student the words that go with the pictures. For example, cut out the picture of a woman or have the students find one and then find the words that go with the picture. Have students learn the words for the elements of their own families and find words in the newspaper which relate to them.

You might find the picture of a woman and relate it to "mother", "mom", "woman", "wahine" and so on. Because there will be opportunity for the student to use the words, he will learn them quickly.

A teacher told us that compound words are difficult.

For example, "house" is easy, as we said. The word "wear" is easy too because this is what we do with clothes and so relates directly to us. But the word "warehouse" is hard because the foreign student hears "wear" and wonders how to relate wearing to a house.

Have your students underline new words on a page of the newspaper. Have them circle names of places and find them on maps. Have them cut out pictures of community leaders and learn the names that go with the faces. Have them cut out items and match them with the stores they would purchase them in. Have them look for a job they would like to have and talk about applying for it. Have them look at a picture and tell you what is in it. Have them listen to news on the radio or television and then discuss the same news in the paper, even if you only get to the first paragraph and the picture.

Have them find pictures and match words to the pictures. These should be very simple at first like a car or a dog or a child. They can get more complicated as the English of the student improves.

Have them find colors and the words that go with them. Have them clip out numbers and learn the numbers in English, pasting them in booklets. Have them find so many numbers that they don't have to stop and think about them.

Help With Money

Work also with money. They need to know what things cost and what value to get for their money.

One of the hardest things for a new citizen to learn is how much he should be able to get something for. He may learn the price fairly easily but learning whether this is a fair or good price is another thing and will only come with a lot of help.

Any work you can do with money with your foreign students will be valuable to them. This applies to youngsters as well as adults but particularly to the latter. The ads will be invaluable for this practice, both in learning values and in the actual mathematic operations. Getting value for the money he spends on groceries or at the hardware store is one of the most important things the adult foreigner has to learn.

Always have newspapers available in the room for the students to browse through as they wish. You may work in one particular subject area but experience has shown that students will soon take you into other areas as they expand their interests and as their English expands.

The same thing will happen - only more so - as happens in elementary classes where the newspaper is being used for vocabulary building and other language exercises. The students will jump ahead into new areas as they want to know more. You must be flexible and let them go where they will. Even if you are sure a particular word is much too difficult for a student, help him

use it. He may surprise you.

Our teacher who learned English as a second language after coming from Samoa said that the teacher should smile a lot. This eliminates the fear a lot of young students have in a new situation.

An exchange teacher from Japan talking to the Samoan teacher said just the opposite. In Japan the teacher is the center of authority and does not smile very much.

In Hawaii, a smile and a newspaper may be the best combination for teaching foreign students. Try it and see!

TESOL stands for Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages. You may also hear TESL, Teaching English as a Second Language, and TEFL, Teaching English as a Foreign Language. TESL and TEFL are essentially the same except for the environment in which the teaching takes place.